



# **OAKSWOOD GROUP**

## **Health & Wellbeing Policy**



### **Statement of Principles**

This policy forms part of the Oakswood Group's general Health & Safety policy arrangements as well as contributing to the promotion of good health. It encompasses such matters as smoking, alcohol and drugs, and stress.

The Oakswood Group committed to providing a working environment and management practices which promote employee wellbeing and good health.

The Oakswood Group recognises the importance of improving the health, safety and wellbeing of staff as indicated by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). The Oakswood Group will fulfil its commitment by:

- Identifying potential hazards or circumstances which might contribute to inappropriate levels of work-related stress and conduct risk assessments to eliminate or control the risks from such stress. These circumstances and risk assessments will then be kept under review;
- Consulting with relevant safety representatives and other stakeholders (e.g. Heads of Department), on issues relating to staff wellbeing;
- Increasing awareness and understanding of stress related issues and the importance of general good health and wellbeing through identification, prevention, control and subsequent monitoring of causes of stress at work including where appropriate training and health promotion
- Providing enhanced training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices appropriate to this policy;
- Ensuring that appropriate resources are provided to enable managers to implement Oakswood Group agreed staff wellbeing strategy.
- This likewise works with all learners under the care of the Oakswood Group
- This will also be looked at in relation to Learner's and Staff in relation to the Duty of care under Prevent.
- Also in relation to items and policies such as Harassment or bullying and item under the equality and Diversity Policy and procedures.

In turn, staff will be encouraged to take a responsible approach to health and Wellbeing issues, including assisting those conducting risk assessments of stress in the workplace.

### **Definitions**

The Health & Safety Executive defines stress as being "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them". However it is important that the difference between "pressure" and "stress" be acknowledged: pressure does not necessarily give rise to stress and pressure can sometimes motivate. Whilst acknowledging that pressure and stress may also be caused by a range of issues external to the workplace, the Oakswood Group prime responsibility is to address work related stress.



## Policy Objectives

The aims of the policy are to:

- Provide advice and information about minimising risks to health
- Outline specific responsibilities
- Educate staff about the causes, effects and management of stress
- Develop partnerships with external organizations, agencies and individuals to improve health at work.
- Provide relevant support to staff, in particular ensuring managers are both proactive and respond in a timely manner to concerns raised by staff.

To achieve these objectives the Oakwood Group will:

- Carry out risk assessments to identify health and wellbeing issues related to work
- Implement appropriate control measures to minimise risks to health and wellbeing
- Monitor and audit arrangements in an effort to improve the quality of the working environment
- Raise awareness of the causes, signs and symptoms of stress and stress-related illness, and of the ways in which Oakwood Group supports individuals
- Provide training to all managers on the Health & Wellbeing Policy and how to use it effectively
- Educate employees in techniques for recognising and coping with potentially stressful situations
- Provide information about appropriate welfare services to all employees

The following have been identified as appropriate measures of employee performance and wellbeing for the purposes of managing health & wellbeing:

- Absences will be recorded and monitored for developing patterns
- Exit questionnaires will be used and followed up with exit interviews where appropriate
- Use of the Oakwood Group service will be monitored without breaching confidentiality
- HR will conduct a biennial review, agreed jointly with the staff wellbeing indicators to identify trends or hot spots.
- Other forms of data gathering will also be used to include self-referral.

## Causes of stress

The Health and Safety Executive have produced a number of **Management Standards** which cover the primary sources of stress at work that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. These are:

- **Demands** – i.e. workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control** – i.e. how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- **Support** – i.e. the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- **Relationships** – i.e. promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.



- **Role** – such as whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- **Change** – such as how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated within the organisation.

The Companies performance on well-being and stress management will be assessed in the context of the HSE Management Standards. The following HSE chart provides a brief indicator of what can be done to manage the main causes of stress identified.

Cause of Stress	What can be done
<p><b><i>Demands.</i></b>  <i>Employees often become overloaded if they cannot cope with the amount of work or type of work they are asked to do</i></p>	<p>The job design and the provision should be considered to identify ways to manage the overload. Consideration should also be given to alternative work patterns and environment.</p>
<p><b><i>Control.</i></b>  <i>Employees can feel disaffected and perform poorly if they have no say over how and when they do their work.</i></p>	<p>Consideration should be given to how employees are involved in decision making and their contribution as individuals and as part of teams.</p>
<p><b><i>Support.</i></b>  <i>Employees can feel isolated and stressed if they feel they cannot speak with their line managers or if they do not feel they have adequate support or provided with constructive feedback and advice</i></p>	<p>Employees should be given the opportunity to discuss the issues causing stress with their line manager sympathetically and should be kept informed of any developments or changes.</p>
<p><b><i>Relationships.</i></b>  <i>Employees can often experience problems relating to bullying, harassment or discipline as a result of poor working relationships or lack of recognition or reward.</i></p>	<p>The policies and procedures relating to handling grievances, absence, misconduct and bullying and harassment should be reviewed on a regular basis.</p>
<p><b><i>Role</i></b>  <i>Employees can feel anxious if there is ambiguity regarding their role or where there is a lack of clarity in terms of what is expected of them.</i></p>	<p>Particular attention should be paid to the induction of new staff and the creation of meaningful and well-structured job descriptions. Every effort should be made to maintain a close link between individual targets and organisational goals.</p>
<p><b><i>Change</i></b>  <i>Changes in market demands, technology and organisational structure can lead to insecurity and uncertainty.</i></p>	<p>Where changes are anticipated every effort must be made to communicate / consult with all those affected and to discuss and resolve issues together.</p>



## Responsibilities

All staff have a requirement and responsibility to comply with Health & Safety measures instituted by the Oakswood Group. The following people will have an involvement as follows:

**Senior Management** are responsible for ensuring:

- i. The engagement of management at all levels in the importance of managing staff wellbeing.
- ii. Allocation of appropriate resources to enable managers to deliver the agreed strategy proactively, use of the counselling service and health referrals for expert opinion.
- iii. That the identified proactive initiatives, behaviours, systems and policies are embedded in the culture of the organisation.
- iv. That the strategy is driven via collective responsibility at Senior Management level.
- v. That the Director has an overriding responsibility to monitor delivery and alert the Senior Management Team to any concerns.

## Heads of Departments

In addition to the general duties of all managers detailed below, Heads of Departments influence the culture in their part of the organisation. Their specific responsibilities include:

- i. Active implementation and promotion of the principles and behaviours contributing to positive staff wellbeing.
- ii. Alertness to employees' personal circumstances and offering additional support where appropriate to members of staff experiencing risks to their wellbeing derived from outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation.
- iii. Ensuring effective communication between management and staff
- iv. In particular, ensuring effective communicating where there are organisational and /or procedural changes which can give rise to increased levels of stress in the workplace.
- v. Ensuring that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated in the Department.

**Line-Managers** will:

- i. Request the Directors to carry out stress risk assessments when it is identified that an employee is suffering from stress or where there is a perceived risk of stress and ensure that any reasonable measures identified are implemented.
- ii. Ensure that employees are consulted at all times over all aspects of their employment that may cause stress or impact on their health and well-being when changes affecting them are planned.
- iii. Ensure that employees receive appropriate training and resources to carry out their duties.
- iv. Ensure that staffs are provided with appropriate developmental opportunities.
- v. Manage absence in accordance with the Absence Management Policy
- vi. Consider workloads to ensure jobs are realistic and manageable.
- vii. Monitor working hours, overtime and holidays to encourage individuals to take breaks as required by legislation.
- viii. Familiarise themselves with the Dignity & Respect at Work Policy concerning bullying and harassment and ensure that employees are aware that this is not tolerated by Oakswood Group
- ix. Recognise that employees may have experiences in their personal lives that may make them vulnerable to pressures at work and which may have a temporary influence on their work performance e.g. health issues or personal circumstances



- x. Treat all discussions with employees around personal stress as confidential unless it is necessary to involve others to deal with the issue and the employee gives written agreement for disclosure.
- xi. Where appropriate discuss issues around stress with their Health and Safety Officer or a Director.

**Human Resources Manager will:**

- i. Provide support and guidance to staff on the Health & Wellbeing Policy
- ii. Monitor the implementation of the policy within Oakswood Group with all relevant stakeholders
- iii. Provide line-managers with training in all matters relating to this policy
- iv. Provide guidance to line-managers on the implementation of the policy to include the appropriate management of individual workloads
- v. Will advise, guide and support departments in carrying out stress risk assessments by trained individuals as requested by line-managers.
- vi. Provide support to employees experiencing stress and advise them and their line-managers of the support available.
- vii. Raise awareness amongst all staff of the importance of work/life balance and the opportunities to achieve this with Oakswood Group

**Employees will**

- i. Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and co-operate with Management in any measures taken to reduce stress
- ii. Be committed to avoiding causing health and wellbeing problems for other employees, including acting in accordance with the principals of the Dignity & Respect at Work Policy
- iii. Be proactive in identifying occasions when they may be suffering from health and wellbeing problems, either work-related, or due to external factors, and alert their line-manager to these where appropriate.
- iv. Where employees feel unable to discuss the issues with their managers, they are encouraged to discuss it with their Health & Safety Officer, HR representative, or line manager. Oakswood Group recognises that, as with Dignity and Respect at Work, where the manager may be seen as a cause of stress, in part or in full, concerns over stress can be immediately taken to a more senior manager.
- v. Take advantage of opportunities for counselling and training when recommended, to include making use of the Employee Assistance programme.

**Actively managing employee wellbeing**

Oakswood Group efforts will be concentrated on the promotion of health and wellbeing in the workplace. This will include deploying other Company policies and procedures as appropriate (for example, the policies on Absence Management, Dignity & Respect at Work, Flexible Working Policy, etc. In addition, recognising and managing health and wellbeing issues will be incorporated into training for managers.

**Stress Risk Assessments**

The Oakswood Group is obliged to assess the nature and scale of risk to the health of its staff in order to implement appropriate preventative and protective steps (see Appendix A).



The policy recognises that employees' tolerance thresholds differ and that non-work factors may play a part in determining an individual employee's response.

It is of paramount importance that employees share with the Oakswood Group any relevant information which might impact upon their ability to cope with reasonable pressures at work, to include issues such as Disability etc.

Details of the factors likely to lead to work-related stress, methods of assessment and guidance on the completion of a risk assessment is available for all line-managers from the Human Resources Manager.

#### **Training courses – Staff Development Office**

A variety of courses may be accessed as part of the Oakswood Group on-going commitment to continuing professional development which can contribute to an individual's ability to be proactive in managing factors which could lead to health and wellbeing problems.

#### **Communicating the Well-being policy and measures taken by Oakswood Group to manage work related stress.**

- I. The Well-being policy will be available from the Health and Safety and Human Resources offices.
- II. Leaflets will be produced for employees who do not have easy access to a computer.
- III. The Well-being policy will be promoted in Emails, News and Views and in Briefings.
- IV. The contents of the policy will be covered during general induction training sessions for employees and specific training on stress awareness.

#### **Work Life Balance**

Oakswood Group offers a range of family friendly policies which can provide opportunities for staff to develop a good work/Life balance listed below.

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Recruitment and Vetting Policy
- Environmental Policy

#### **Useful Contacts**

There are also a number of specialist organisations which can offer help and advice in dealing with specific problems such as bereavement, debt, addiction and mental wellbeing. Further information is available from the Directors.

#### **Policy Review**

The Directors will co-ordinate a review of the Oakswood Group Health & Wellbeing Policy on a biennial basis (or more frequently as necessary) to maintain compliance with legislation and good practice. The review will be undertaken in liaison with the Health & Safety Officer.

The policy will be Equality Impact Assessed by the Equal Opportunities Manager particularly in respect of the DDA 1995.

**Appendix A**

Date

Who is the person undertaking the Interview review

Member of Staff or learner

Do you know who the First Aid person is?	
Do you know what to do in case of a Fire?	
Do you know the requirements for Lone working?	
Have you had Safeguarding Training and when was this?	
Do you feel you take all safety precautions when working with learners outside of the Oakswood Group e.g. is your diary up to date and people know where you are?	
Do you know who to tell when you feel ill and what steps you should take?	
Do you think you organise your working week well and do so with things such as Health and Safety checks at Work based learning locations?	
Do you carry out your own areas Health and Safety checks?	
Do you keep on top of your own work load Can you give examples of how you measure this?	
If you fall behind do you explain why and inform your line manager in good time?	
Do you have any items which do not enable you to work to your full potential?	
The Oakswood Group is an employer with an ethos of wellbeing for both staff and learners are there any	





concerns or items of suggestions you would like to make?	
Feedback	
Further Interview required and date	

Signature of member of staff

Interviewee

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